should integrate trade in services. The importance of implementing trade facilitation measures was also underlined.

- The importance of people-to-people contact as a key constituent in regional connectivity was stressed.
- The SAARC countries committed themselves to combat terrorism and agreed to consider India's proposal to work towards finalizing an Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters.

3. Bilateral and contentious issues are explicitly excluded by the SAARC Charter from SAARC's deliberations. Implementation of the Declaration will considerably upgrade regional cooperation and positively impact on the climate of relations in the subcontinent as a whole.

Vijaywada-Ranchi NH in Orissa

*346. MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the status of Vijayawada-Ranchi Highway Project which passes through Orissa;

(b) whether Government are aware that this project passes through 12 tribal dominated districts of Orissa and on completion, it would open up opportunities for a large number of tribals to improve their economy; and

(c) if so, what is the time-frame within which it would be taken up and completed?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Vijayawada-Ranchi route comprising the National Highways and the State roads, having a total length of about 1652 km, traverse through the States of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Jharkhand with lengths of about 236 km., 1219 & 197 Km. respectively. This Ministry is primarily responsible for development and maintenance of National Highways. In Orissa, this route having a length of 1219 Km. comprising 239 Km. stretches of different National Highways and 980 Km. length of State roads, is being developed to two lane NH standards as an integrated project by the Central and the State Government through various funding

options. Government of Orissa has already taken up development of about 380 Km. length out of 980 Km. length of State roads. Action has been taken to prepare Detailed Project Report (DPR) for development of balance 600 Km. stretches. The National Highway Stretches in all the three States are being developed by this Ministry. There is no State road involved in this stretch in Andhra Pradesh. The State Government of Jharkhand has already been addressed to take up the development of the State road stretch on this route falling in the State.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) It is too early to indicate the time frame for completion of the entire route.

Manpower requirement in I.T. Sector

*347. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether any study has been conducted to assess the manpower requirement in the Information Technology sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the action taken to fill up the gap of demand and supply of manpower?

THE MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN): (a) to (d) The assessment of manpower requirement in Information Technology sector is a continuous process. Government of India along with industry association like National Association of Software & Service Companies (NASSCOM) has been continuously looking at this sector's requirements from time to time. It is seen that the issue of manpower requirement is not as much about the institutional seat availability and output as about the nature of skills and training provided in these institutions.

In order to impart the desired skill sets, various initiatives have been taken by the Government as also by NASSCOM. Some of the initiatives taken by Government through various Ministries and State Governments include: